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ANNUAL REPORT

3rd SESSION

17th LEGISLATURE

Prorogued Nov. 6, 1974

ALBERTA HANSARD

G. AMERONGEN
SPEAKER

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ALBERTA HANSARD

ANNUAL REPORT

3RD SESSION 17TH LEGISLATURE

Acting on the advice of the Special Select Committee on Members' Services, Standing Orders and Forms of Proceedings of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta were revised effective on prorogation of the Third Session of The Seventeenth Legislature. Revision provided minor changes to Mr. Speaker's responsibilities covering distribution of copies of the Alberta Hansard. These changes are embodied in Standing Order 99.

GENERAL

A daily Hansard was published on time for each of 71 sitting days. The publication system, whereby debates of an evening sitting were reported in the same issue as proceedings of the following afternoon, was maintained. Copies of transcripts of daily proceedings of the House were deposited in the Members' Lobby as soon as available following preliminary editing. This service was continued for the purpose of providing Members with the opportunity for quick perusal of this unofficial record. The system was continued which permitted Members to call to the attention of the Editor any item in these transcripts which was believed to be in error. Any communication relevant to editing was undertaken between a Member and the Editor under terms set out in Standing Order 98.

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EQUIPMENT

There were no major changes made to sound recording, computer terminal or tape playback equipment during the Session. Some difficulty was encountered by Hansard employees using portable recorders to transcribe from tapes produced from meetings of sub-committees of Supply, and by others who transcribed from this equipment. An order for more efficient playback facilities was placed so as to rectify this major deficiency.

The Members' Services Committee discussed fully the efficiency of the House sound recording system and recommended the installation of a completely new system to replace existing facilities which, being 10 years old, are greatly outmoded and require continuous maintenance. Specifications for a new system will be presented for the consideration of members of the committee by the Department of Public Works.

STAFFING

Again, acting on the recommendation of the Members' Services Committee, the Speaker entered into contracts with the Editor and six key senior employees of Hansard staff to provide some security of tenure to qualified and experienced employees who had previously been engaged on a part-time basis. The retention, by means of contract of employment, of a core group of experienced employees lent considerably more stability to the temporary employment feature of the Hansard organization. However, at the commencement of each portion of a Session the Editor was required to engage new staff, many of whom were inexperienced and therefore of limited value temporarily. Rates of pay for wage staff were adjusted during the Session to correspond to cost-of-living adjustments provided to Alberta public

service employees during the same period. The guarantee of minimum remuneration for night sitting staff and the payment of partial wages for training periods, as undertaken in 1973, was continued.

PRINTING

Since its inception in 1972 the printing objective for Hansard has been to provide a typeface of better quality than that which can be achieved by photo-offset reproduction. For this reason the Speaker entered into an agreement with Jasper Printing Limited, Edmonton, which firm had acquired phototypesetting equipment capable of operating under the stimulus of IBM computer magnetic tape. During 1974, Jasper Printing continued to provide a Hansard printed by the photo-offset method used previously and meanwhile conducted a series of trials using its phototypesetting equipment. The final issue of the spring sittings and the eleven issues of the fall sittings were produced by the latter method.

It was subsequently determined that the interface between the current computer program and the equipment obtained by Jasper Printing Limited deprived the Editor of control of the final form in which Hansard was published for these twelve issues. It was also determined that the total system could not provide an acceptable range of publishing features. It was therefore necessary to conclude that a new computer program, combined with sophisticated photo-typesetting equipment, was still required if the objective of a professionally-printed document is to be attained. The search for a workable system continues to be conducted by both Data Centre computer services and Edmonton printing firms.

DISTRIBUTION

The level of circulation required printing of 1100 daily copies and 200 bound copies of Alberta Hansard. The bindery engaged to supply 1973 bound volumes experienced great difficulty in meeting distribution deadlines. Therefore, 1974 binding has been tendered to another firm, insistence being placed on better delivery timing. Subscribers are served by third-class mail delivery.

FINANCIAL

Increases in the cost of producing Hansard are unrelenting. Total expenditure for the fiscal year 1974-75 will possibly be about $250,000. With an estimated number of approximately 98 sitting days between April 1, 1974 and March 31, 1975, the cost per issue has risen to $2,500 compared to $1,700 in 1973-74 and $1,400 in 1972-73. Revenue from subscribers and over-counter sales amounted to $6,530.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

On behalf of Members of the Legislative Assembly and Hansard subscribers, the Speaker is pleased to acknowledge with thanks the special diligence and dedication of Hansard Editor Elizabeth Bishop and her staff. Gratitude is also expressed to the technicians of Alberta Government Telephones for their vigilance; also to Jasper Printing Limited personnel who invariably completed assignments even when under stress provided by pressing deadlines.